

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5192

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MOGADISCIO 1428

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SO, US

SUBJ: CONGRESSMAN SIKES' TALK WITH SOMALI FOREIGN MINISTER

SUMMARY: IN CONVERSATION WITH CONGRESSMAN SIKES AUGUST 18, SOMALI FOREIGN MINISTER SAID SOMALIA WOULD PERMIT US SHIP VISITS IF US PROVIDED SOMALIA WITH MILITARY ASSISTANCE BUT SAID US-SOMALI FRIENDSHIP MUST BE WITHOUT PRECONDITIONS. HE REJECTED SUGGESTION THAT SOMALIA MIGHT DENY SOVIET UNION USE OF BERBERA FACILITIES AS PRICE FOR US HELP. ABDURAHMAN CLAIMED 15,000 CUBANS NOW HELPING ETHIOPIANS -- A CLAIM WE VIEW AS PREPOSTEROUS -- AND CALLED FOR US MILITARY ASSISTANCE WITHIN 48 HOURS. DISCUSSION WAS CORDIAL AND FRANK ON BOTH SIDES, WITH INDICATION ON SOMALI SIDE THAT SOME IN GSDR NOW FEELING INCREASINGLY NERVOUS ABOUT SOVIET INTENTIONS FOLLOWING SOMALI WARNING TO USSR TO BACK AWAY FROM ITS MILITARY SUPPORT OF MENGISTU. END SUMMARY.

1. CONGRESSMAN SIKES MET LATE EVENING OF AUGUST 18 WITH FOREIGN MINISTER ABDURAHMAN JAMA BARRE. ABDURAHMAN BEGAN BY SKETCHING HISTORY OF SOMALIA'S COLONIAL HERITAGE WHICH LEFT IT DIVIDED COUNTRY WITH SUBSTANTIALSOMALI POPULATIONS IN ADJACENT NATIONS IN AREA. SOMALI PEOPLES THEREFORE VICTIM OF COLONIZATION, PARTICULARLY BY ETHIOPIANS. SOVIET UNION HAD ASSISTED SOMALIA WITH MILITARY AND ECONOMIC AID AFTER WESTERN NATIONS HAD DECLINED TO DO SO.

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2. AS CONSEQUENCE OF SOMALIA'S TIES TO SOVIET UNION, WESTERN COUNTRIES HAD ACCUSED SOMALIA OF BEING COMMUNIST NATION AND RUSSIAN SATELLITE. AT TIME OF SOMALI DROUGHT IN 1974-75 WHEN SOMALI NOMADS WERE DYING BY THOUSANDS, US ACCUSED SOMALIA OF PROVIDING SOVIET UNION WITH MILITARY BASE ON SOMALI SOIL. US THUS RESPONSIBLE FOR DISCORD IN

BILATERAL REATIONS.

3. CONGRESSMAN SIKES SAID THAT US PREOCCUPATION WITH VIET NAM AND OTHER PROBLEMS HAD RESULTED IN NEGLECT OF AFRICAN COUNTRIES, INCLUDING SOMALIA. US HOWEVER PROVIDED 25-35 PERCENT SUPPORT FOR UN AND THEREFORE US SUPPORTED PROGRAMS HAD CONTINUED TO ASSIST SOMALIA. MORE DIRECT ASSISTANCE TO SOMALIA MAY HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE BUT REGRETTABLY DID NOT OCCUR. IN MEANTIME, SOMALIA WAS RECEIVING ASSISTANCE FROM SOVIET UNION WHICH WAS BUILDING ITS OWN COLONIAL SYSTEM IN AFRICA. CUBANS ALSO HAVE HELPED TO UNDERWRITE SOVIET EFFORT. SOMALIA HAD PERMITTED SOVIETS TO ESTABLISH MAJOR BASE ON ITS TERRITORY. RUSSIAN TRAWLERS WERE DENUDING ADJACENT SEAS OF FISH. HE DOUBTED THAT THE SOVIETS WOULD NOW EASILY LEAVE SOMALIA.

4. CONGRESSMAN SIKES THEN ASKED ON WHAT BASIS SOMALIA SOUGHT CLOSER RELATIONS WITH US. WOULD SOMALIA TELL THE RUSSIANS TO MOVE OUT SO THE US COULD MOVE IN?

5. ABDURAHMAN DID NOT IMMEDIATELY ANSWER QUESTION BUT TURNED TO SOVIET PRESENCE IN ETHIOPIA. HE SAID SOVIET UNION WAS SOVEREIGN STATE AND COULD MAINTAIN RELATIONS WITH WHOMEVER IT WISHED. SOMALIA COULD WELL UNDERSTAND SOVIET ASSISTANCE TO MENGISTU REGIME ON LIMITED OR QUOTE NORMAL UNQTE BASIS HELP BUT SAID THAT WHEN SOVIET ASSISTANCE CONSTITUTED A DANGER TO SOMALIA, THEN GSDR SHARPLY DISAGREED
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WITH SOVIET POLICY. US HAD ALSO BUILT ETHIOPIA MILITARY STRENGTH IN PAST AND ENABLED ETHIOPIAN REGIME TO COLONIZE PEOPLES WITHIN OLD ABYSSINIAN EMPIRE.

6. CONGRESSMAN SIKES SAID US AND ETHILPIA HAD BEEN FRIENDS FOR MANY YEARS. US HAD ESTABLISHED A US COMMUNICATIONS STATION AT KAGNEW AND THIS HAD SERVED US INTERESTS. AMOUNT OF ARMS US HAD PROVIDED ETHIOPIA, HOWEVER, HAD NEVER BEEN LARGE. BUT NOW NEW SITUATION PREVAILED IN HORN AND NEW OPPORTUNITY WAS OFFERED TO STRENGTHEN SOMALI-US RELATIONS. SOVIET UNION CONSTITUTED THREAT IN THE AREA. SOVIETS WANTED TERRITORY: THEY WANTED ERITREA; THEY WANTED PORT OF DJIBOUTI; AND IT SERVED SOMALIA'S INTERESTS TO THWART SOVIET UNION BECOMING ALL-POWERFUL IN REGION.

7. CONGRESSMAN SIKES SAID THAT CONGRESS WAS INTERESTED IN SOMALIA AND HE WAS ANXIOUS TO TELL CONGRESS THAT SOMALIA WANTED TO BE A FRIEND TO THE US. HE ASKED IF HE COULD TELL HIS COLLEAGUES IN WASHINGTON THAT THE SOMALIS WERE INFORMING THE RUSSIANS THEY COULD NO LONGER OPERATE OUT OF THE BERBERA BASE OR THAT TIME LIMIT HAD BEEN PUT ON SOVIET USE OF BERBERA BASE?

8. FOREIGN MINISTER SAID THAT ONE POINT MUST BE ABSOLUTELY CLEAR: SOMALIA'S FRIENDSHIP WITH USSR HAD NOT BEEN ESTABLISHED ON BASIS OF CONDITIONS. WHEN SOMALIA MADE FRIENDS WITH ANOTHER NATION, FRIENDSHIP WOULD BE WITHOUT PRECONDITIONS IT WAS NATURAL HOWEVER THAT IF SOMALIA'S FRIENDS HELPED HER, SHE WOULD HELP THEM. THIS WAS IN THE NATURE OF THINGS. THUS IF US DECIDED TO HELP SOMALIA TODAY, QUOTE WHY SHOULDN'T WE HELP YOU TOMORROW UNQUOTE? BUT SOMALI DID NOT ACCEPT PRECONDITIONS AS A PRICE FOR ITS FRIENDSHIP.

9. FOREIGN MINISTER THEN GAVE RESUME OF OAU MEDIATION EFFORT IN PAST YEARS OVER LGADEN. HE TOLD CONGRESSMAN SIKES THAT WSLF HAD BEEN ESTABLISHED IN 1943 AND HAD LONG AND TURBULENT CONFIDENTIAL

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HISTORY. IN 1967, LIBERATION FRONT MEMBERS HAD BEEN PUT IN PRISON AND HAD BEEN EXTREMELY DIFFICULT INTERNAL PROBLEM IN SOMALIA.. AFTER FUTILE ATTEMPT TO NEGOTIATE FUTURE OF OGADEN PEOPLES THROUGH OAU, SOMALIA HAD DECIDED TO LET WSLF PURSUE ITS OWN DESTINY.

10. REGARDING MILITARY SITUATION IN ETHIOPIA, ABDURAHMAN SAID THAT WSLF HAD LIBERATED OVER 97 PERCENT OF THE TERRITORY. SOVIET UNION HOWEVER WAS PROVIDING HUGH ARMS SHIPMENTS TO

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ACTION A-01

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ETHIOPIA. HE CLAIMED THERE WERE AT PRESENT 15,000 CUBANS IN ETHIOPIA. HIS GOVERNMENT WAS DEEPLY CONCERNED AT SITUATION.

SOVIET UNION WAS ETHIOPIA'S PRINCIPAL BACKER BUT SOMALIA WOULD NEVER ACCEPT CONTINUED ETHIOPIAN COLONIZATION OF SOMALI PEOPLES. BOTH IZVESTIA AND TASS HAD MADE IT ABSOLUTELY CLEAR THAT SOVIET UNION SIDED WITH THE ETHIOPIAN POSITION.

11. ON SOVIET BASE QUESTION, ABDURAHMAN NOTED THEN THAT IF CONGRESSMAN SIKES BELIEVED THAT SOVIET UNION HAD BASE IN SOMALIA, THEN SOMALIA WAS ALREADY COLONIZED NATION. ALL SUCH ALLEGATIONS WERE FALSE.

12. CONGRESSMAN SIKES ASKED WHAT WEAPONS SOMALIA NEEDED FOR ITS SECURITY. ABDURAHMAN SAID SHOPPING LIST WHICH HAD BEEN PROVIDED WASHINGTON DID NOT INCLUDE HEAVY WEAPONS, BUT HEAVY WEAPONS WERE NOW NEEDED. HE INCLUDED PLANES AND TANKS. ASKED HOW QUICKLY SUCH ASSISTANCE WAS REQUIRED, ABDURAHMAN SAID WITHIN 48 HOURS.

13. CONGRESSMAN SIKES THEN EXPLAINED CONGRESSIONAL DELAYS IN MEETING ARMS REQUESTS. ASKED IF THE SOVIET UNION CONTINUED TO SUPPLY SOMALIA, ABDURAHMAN SAID SOVIET MILITARY EQUIPMENT WAS CONTINUING TO ARRIVE. IT WAS ALSO CONTINUING TO ARRIVE IN ETHIOPIA IN GREATER QUANTITIES. HE CLAIMED THAT HUNDREDS OF TANKS HAD ARRIVED AT ASSAD, ALSO JET PLANES. CUBANS ALSO HELPING TO TRAIN ETHIOPIAN MILITARY.
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14. CONGRESSMAN SIKES SAID THAT US WAS INTERESTED IN AMERICAN SHIP VISITS TO SOMALI PORTS. HE ASKED IF SOMALIA WOULD FAVORABLY RECEIVE SUCH A REQUEST. ABDURAHMAN SAID THAT IF SOMALIA OBTAINED AID FROM US, THERE WAS NO REASON WHY US SHIPS COULD NOT VISIT SOMALIA.

15. CONGRESSMAN SIKES CLOSED BY SAYING THAT IT WAS TIME FOR US AND SOMALIA TO MOVE CLOSER TOGETHER. HE SAID HE WOULD PASS ABDURAHMAN'S MESSAGE TO HIS COLLEAGUES IN CONGRESS.

16. ABDURAHMAN SAID THE PRINCIPAL PROBLEM WAS ONE OF TIME. HE ACCUSED RUSSIANS OF MANEUVERING AT UN IN SUPPORT OF ETHIOPIA AND CLAIMED SOVIET UNION HOPED TO CONVOKE SECURITY COUNCIL TO HELP RESOLVE PROBLEM. HE ASKED FOR US ASSISTANCE IN BLOCKING SOVIET INITIATIVE AND SAID THAT US STATEMENT CLARIFYING ITS POSITION ON SITUATION IN HORN OF AFRICA WOULD BE MOST HELPFUL TO SOMALIA.

17. FOREGOING HAS NOT BEEN CLEARED WITH CONGRESSMAN SIKES.
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AUGUST 18, SOMALI FOREIGN MINISTER SAID SOMALIA WOULD PERMIT
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